

DELIVERING OUTCOMES FOR COMMUNITIES CASE STUDY: BUILDING TRUST WITH LOCAL PARTNERS IN INDIAN COUNTRY **PINE RIDGE, SOUTH DAKOTA (2015—PRESENT)**

COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT

- Oglala Sioux Tribe (OST) of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, the eighth largest reservation in the U.S., with a land mass roughly equal to the size of Connecticut
- 2007: Life expectancy = 48 (males) and 52 (females)
- 2011: Population estimates of the reservation range vary from 28,000 to 40,000
- Tribe estimates 4000 homes are needed to resolve over occupancy and substandard housing conditions on the reservation
- FEMA estimates 1/3 of homes have no utilities (water, sewer, septic)
- Tribe estimates unemployment at 87%
- 2014-15: Very high attempted suicide rate. There are 103 recorded suicide attempts by people ages 12 to 24 in four-month period (12/2014 to 3/2015)

THE CHALLENGE

Living conditions are austere for the Oglala Lakota Sioux Tribe of Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota. Leaders and residents of this community understand the need for an infusion of significant resources to resolve their many challenges, the most urgent of which are substandard housing conditions and high teen suicide rate. Federal engagement with this community is complicated by historical and contemporary tensions, including:

- OST mistrust of the federal government that has built up over centuries due to a history of conflicts over relocation, sovereignty, and broken agreements related to land resources and limited federal support.
- Tension between the Tribal government and the local Thunder Valley Community Development Corporation (Thunder Valley CDC), which applied for and received the Promise Zone designation from the federal government.
- Low capacity of the Tribal government to obtain and manage available assistance from federal agencies, including the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), and others.
- Incomplete or inaccurate federal demographic and geographic data about OST (in part due to Tribal distrust of the federal government) that negatively impacted the Tribe's ability to qualify for and implement certain types of federal assistance.

PARTNERS

- Oglala Sioux Tribe (OST)
- Thunder Valley Community Development Corporation (Thunder Valley CDC)
- Department of Interior
 - Bureau of Indian Education (BIE)

- Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)
 - Bureau of Reclamation (BOR)
- U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)
 - Rural Development (RD)
- Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) U.S. Department of Commerce—Economic Development Administration (EDA)
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)
 - Indian Health Service (IHS)
 - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ)
- Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) Department of Homeland Security - Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
- U.S. Department of Defense – U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
- U.S. Department of Transportation – Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
- U.S. Department of Energy - National Renewable Energy Lab (NREL)
- Center for Disaster Philanthropy
- U. S. Environmental Protection Agency

EXERCISE

Through the Promise Zones initiative, the federal government partners with and invests in a number of high-poverty urban, rural and tribal communities to accomplish the following goals: create jobs, leverage private investment, increase economic activity, expand educational opportunities, and reduce violent crime. In April 2015, the Thunder Valley CDC won a national competition and the Pine Ridge Reservation was designated a Promise Zone. The foundation for the community revitalization plan presented in the Promise Zone application was built on successful implementation of a HUD Sustainable Communities planning grant. Also in 2015, the Pine Ridge area was buffeted by severe storms and flooding, resulting in President Obama also signing a disaster declaration in August 2015 to provide emergency assistance to the Oglala Sioux Tribe.

The combination of the Disaster declaration and the Promise Zone designation resulted in multiple federal agencies trying to work with various Tribal organizations on the Pine Ridge Reservation at the same time. While USDA led the coordination of the Promise Zone initiative, FEMA coordinated emergency assistance across federal agencies. By October 2015, tensions were running high and the Tribal President sent a signal to the staff of the OST government who run tribal programs that he would prefer they not attend a Pine Ridge Promise Zone kickoff meeting that Thunder Valley had organized. As a result, there was minimal local participation in the kickoff meeting that more than 40 federal partners attended.

In your assigned small groups, please discuss:

- What are the special considerations for federal engagement with Indian Nations?
- What is the first thing you would do to understand the community's needs?

- What are the current challenges and anticipated barriers? What approach can you take to overcome them?
- What federal agencies and resources should come into play?
- What would be important to support long-term sustainability of the project outcomes? What could be recommended as broader policy or program changes across the government?

ACTUAL STEPS TAKEN

1. **Federal Promise Zone Community Liaison:** In order to establish a trusting relationship with the tribal community, the federal Promise Zone community liaison from USDA met with Thunder Valley CDC to better understand OST's culture and organizational structure, and to better understand prior interactions between the Tribe, Thunder Valley CDC and the federal government. She then met with the Oglala Sioux Tribal Council, Tribal members, and Thunder Valley CDC to gain local perspectives and identify the champions for change. She spent significant time building relationships to begin the process of re-establishing trust with the Tribe, including consultation with the Tribal Government as required by law.
2. **Thunder Valley CDC Director of Regional Equity:** At the same time, Thunder Valley CDC hired a former employee of the Tribal government to serve as an intermediary and representative of local non-profit partners to the Tribal government as well as a counterpart to the federal "Promise Zone community liaison". Having previously worked for the OST government, she knew how to navigate the Tribal government, had good relationships with non-profit and community partners across the reservation and could serve as a cultural guide for federal staff. Her involvement helped instill trust and facilitate relationships between Tribal government, local tribal partners and Federal staff.
3. **OST Promise Zone Coordinator** – Concurrently, the Tribal President designated the existing Tribal Coordinating Officer who was serving as the lead for the FEMA recovery mission as the OST's Coordinator for the Promise Zone with responsibility for representing the OST Government's interest. The OST Promise Zone Coordinator and the Thunder Valley Promise Zone Liaison worked with Tribal leadership to establish the priorities and expected outcomes for plans and projects. Federal agencies supported these Tribal leaders and were mindful not to get ahead of the formal OST decision-making process; this relationship proved instrumental in bringing their respective organizations and the community together. With the Tribe in visible leadership roles, the Tribal Council and President began to engage and support some of the projects that were part of the Promise Zone strategy.
4. **Disaster Recovery Framework:** The significant federal effort quickly overwhelmed the capacity of both the Thunder Valley CDC and the Oglala Sioux Tribal Government and departments. USDA and FEMA recognized the need to partner closely and minimize demands on the limited Tribal staff resources so that the Tribe could process and manage the information, and use that information to make informed decisions. FEMA organized the disaster recovery agencies under the National Disaster Recovery Framework; USDA and the other Promise Zone Agencies were able to organize using a modified version of the Framework. FEMA's recovery coordination structure eventually folded into the Promise Zone

organization to unify all federal and tribal efforts. The Tribe did not want to turn down opportunities for assistance, fearing it would never be offered again. At the Tribal leadership's request, USDA and FEMA focused first on capacity building opportunities, including strategic management training for the Tribal Council and support for establishing the Tribal Planning Office. The federal team coordinated with other federal agencies to provide consolidated information on the types of assistance available, doing additional research and leg work to present the Tribe with options and recommendations to support short and long term planning decisions. In some cases, the Tribe was interested, but unable to move forward.

5. **Working Groups:** Working together through the National Disaster Recovery Framework organizational structure, the Tribe and federal partners established Tribal working groups, each co-led by Tribal and Federal co-chairs. The most critical of these groups focused on long-term planning capacity building for the Tribe. This working group worked with Tribal leadership to consider and plan how tribal and federal resources might be combined to build longer term capacity for the Tribe to build change within the community.

UNIQUE OUTCOMES

- In November 2015, the OST Tribal liaison and the OST Liaison for the FEMA recovery led and convened a task force of high capacity Tribal members to draft a concept paper to present to the Tribal Council for the development of a Tribal Planning Office.
- In December 2015, the Tribal Council approved and supported funding in the amount of \$200,000 to begin development of the Tribal Planning Department. They included a specific requirement that an independent advisory board be appointed to protect it from the changing political dynamics of the Tribe. Final development of the office is still pending an ordinance from the full OST Council to waive the Tribal pay scale in order to recruit qualified professionals.
- Economic Development Administration (EDA) provided a \$51,000 grant to pay for development of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), which will build on the Comprehensive Regional Strategy that was created with support from a 2010 HUD Sustainable Communities planning grant.
- The Tribal Planning Office will also work to establish accurate and locally verified demographic and geographic data that can be used to support tribal applications and implementation of federal resources. It will also help the Tribal government establish policies and procedures and streamline financial processes that underpin the strong internal controls necessary to implement federal awards. The Tribe has initiated the "One Nation One Number" initiative that will assess housing conditions, survey housing occupants, and determine accurate housing needs on the Pine Ridge Reservation.
- When established the Planning Department will be the OST intake point through which federal partners and Thunder Valley CDC will coordinate and filter federal assistance. The Tribe is now applying for funding through USDA's Rural Business Development Program to fund operations in fiscal 2017. In addition, FEMA is funding \$15,000 for delivery of strategic management training for the Tribal Council and program staff.

- To date FEMA has funded nearly \$60 million for the FEMA Permanent Housing Construction program to repair and replace eligible disaster damaged homes. FEMA has housed 150 families in manufactured housing units and repaired 31 traditional stick built homes. An additional 83 families opted to repair their homes using direct financial assistance from FEMA. A total of nearly 400 homes will be replaced or repaired when the program is completed.
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funded a \$900,000 Imminent Threat Grant for portable housing units placed by the OST to temporarily house applicants while FEMA repaired or replaced their homes.
- HUD funded a \$15,000 Technical Assistance Grant to provide training for Tribal partners to develop and execute the “One Nation-One Number” Housing Assessment project.
- Center for Disaster Philanthropy came in with \$15,000 to incentivize post-purchase consumer counseling for homeowners, in partnership with Lakota Funds, Black Hills Housing, and HUD.
- The local atmosphere is changing surrounding federal assistance. USDA is receiving positive feedback, unprompted calls inquiring about the Promise Zone (a term seldom used previously) and support from Tribal members. The Promise Zone is now organizing to sustain the National Disaster Recovery Framework model for interagency coordination, even after the disaster, declaration concludes and FEMA ends its engagement.
- USDA is identifying office space adjacent to BIA offices in a building near the Tribal Council building where in-person meetings can be held among federal, local, and tribal government partners.

UNIFYING THEMES

- As federal partners working in Indian Country, we need to be cognizant and respectful of the government-to-government relationship and local sovereignty. These efforts are only effective if they are locally driven with the federal government serving in a support capacity.
- Patience is a virtue. The pace and capacity of the Tribe are the driving factors in implementing the work at the ground level.
- Do your homework. Particularly when working with Indian tribes, it is important to be cognizant of the culture and values, history, and the community’s relationship with the federal government.
- Take time to build relationships with those who can provide cultural education and lay the groundwork for building partnerships.
- Remove the spotlight from the federal government and allow local organizations and tribal government to be in the lead, even when this might seem to slow the work.
- Be present. If co-location is not possible, commit to frequent on-site visits. Remote engagement is far less effective and will limit the ability to partner as an inter-agency.
- Designate a central federal agency point of contact to coordinate with other federal agencies on behalf of the community to lessen the amount of local capacity needed to engage successfully with the federal government, thus empowering lower capacity partners.
- FEMA has technical assistance resources, even if there is no Presidential disaster declaration for a community. The National Disaster Recovery Framework is a model for interagency coordination in the field, and FEMA can help other agencies organize without being in the lead.

- Structure work to allow key community members to participate and contribute to brainstorming solutions. Create an environment that allows them to make the final decision on what works best for their community.
- Two rules: 1) Keep it legal; 2) Figure out how to help people. If you keep these in mind, the right priorities will emerge.

FEATURED HIGH-VALUE RESOURCES FOR COMMUNITIES

- FEMA National Disaster Recovery Framework (<http://1.usa.gov/1TptLTW>)
- USDA Rural Business Development Program (<http://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/rural-business-development-grants>)
- Economic Development Assistance Planning and Technical Assistance (<http://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/rural-business-development-grants>)
- HUD Technical Assistance and Capacity Building program (http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/administration/grants/fundsavail/nofa2015/cctacb)
- Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) (<http://www.bia.gov/WhoWeAre/AS-IA/IEED/DED/TBCB/index.htm>)
- FEMA Permanent Housing Construction (<https://www.fema.gov/recovery-directorate/assistance-individuals-and-households>)

MEDIA/LINKS/WORKING PAPERS

<http://bit.ly/1Wv9yAG>
<http://1.usa.gov/1WXie3h>
<http://1.usa.gov/1UIEzqz>
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